



Maritime Heritage Working Group

Work Plan

Issue: Maritime Heritage

Description:

The Hawaiian Islands have a long history of continuous and intensive maritime activity, and therefore possess many historic wrecks and other types of submerged archaeological sites. These can represent important phases in early Hawaiian history, such as ancient fishponds and submerged heiau. Western wrecks range from early vessels of exploration to the historic whaling period, from the steamships of the inter-island plantation era to World War II surface ships and submarines. Other sites, like historic naval aircraft, can also be war graves, deserving the appropriate respect and treatment. Collectively, these sites are called maritime heritage resources, significant historic and cultural properties in the marine setting which are associated with our seafaring past. Not only can they provide historians and archaeologists with a unique record of past events, but they can be associated with cultural significance. Additionally, heritage resources can be of great value to both commercial and non-commercial ocean users, including recreational divers and fishermen.

Unfortunately there has been no overall survey of maritime heritage resources in Hawai'i, and proper state and federal diving protocols and/or preservation laws intended to protect such sites are not generally familiar to the public. The illegal damage and removal of publicly-owned historic properties from sanctuary waters has been documented. The educational and socio-economic potential for these resources have not been realized. As part of its management plan review process, the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary is currently considering how these types of public maritime heritage resources might be better protected and understood, and their true heritage values appreciated for the benefit of all.

Method of Communication within the Working Group:

Meetings will be held approximately every two weeks at scheduled intervals, conducted by group conference call and also web-based "go-to-meeting" format. Meeting minutes will subsequently be open to the public, posted on the sanctuary website, and public input will then be received by the group via e-mail. Additionally, meetings will be supported by e-mail exchanges. Pertinent documents will be made available online at a site to be determined. Additionally, the working group has the option to contact technical advisors with expertise in specific areas of the field.